Initiating a development conversation with a qualified patient/prospect

In our experience, patients and families who have significant wealth expect to be invited to discuss philanthropy. Choosing when to raise the subject is a crucial decision. It is best to wait until the active medical issues are resolved and the patient is in a less vulnerable position. Of course, gratitude for a good outcome is a great place to start. However, philanthropic gifts can sometimes be motivated by poor outcomes, especially when giving can be seen as a way to improve the future options for other patients.

Talking points

When initiating a conversation about giving, you will want to cover the following points:

- The connection between research and patient care outcomes
- A compelling and concise summary of your research and its potential impact
- The challenge of securing funding
- The importance of private support from community members
- Asking if the prospects may know of people who would be interested in supporting this work, or might like to support it themselves
- Connecting the prospect to Medical Center Development if they are interested

Script

What follows is a compressed script summarizing a conversation that includes all of the above points. This type of conversation may take place over multiple visits.

**Patient:** Thank you so much for everything you’ve done, doctor.

**Doctor:** I appreciate you saying that. I’m glad things have gone so well for you. You know, we’re working on some exciting research projects here involving molecular genomics that hold the promise of helping us to predict and prevent this disease, rather than having to wait for the symptoms to get as far as yours did. Imagine how much better your experience would have been if you hadn’t suffered for two years before getting the right diagnosis.

**Patient:** I had no idea you did research, too.

**Doctor:** Actually, I spend half of my week focused on it and I’m confident that this research is going to transform our field. But one of our biggest challenges is getting funding. We’ve only been able to get this far because of charitable support from community members.
**Patient:** I thought the government provided for this kind of research.

**Doctor:** NIH support is not enough, especially for innovative projects like ours. At this point, I'm reaching out to key people in the community who care about this disease to raise awareness about our work and to see if people would like to help. I wonder if you might know of anyone who is interested in supporting medical causes who might like to get involved with this project.

**Patient:** I think I do know of some people like that. In fact, I think this is the kind of thing that my wife and I would like to support.

**Doctor:** That would be fantastic. I have a colleague in the Medical Center Development office who works with patients and families who are interested in supporting our research. May I have her call you to discuss this further?